



ONE VIRGINIA NEWS

Inclusive Excellence in the Commonwealth

NEW THIS MONTH

April/May 2021

ONE VIRGINIA NEWS

The *ONE Virginia Plan* continues to shape the state.

SUCCESS STORIES

Virginia sets the standard — The Health Equity Dashboard launches.

DE&I RESOURCES

Understanding and confronting racism.

INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS

Equity versus equality.

INTRODUCTION

ONE Virginia News provides updates from the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) on the implementation and advancement of the *ONE Virginia Plan* throughout state government and all communities of the Commonwealth.

Our goal at ODEI is to develop a framework of inclusive excellence. As Virginia paves the way as the model of equity, we want to make it a lasting beacon of inclusiveness across the country. Within this newsletter, you will learn about the *ONE Virginia Plan*, and the positive effects diversity, equity, and inclusion are having in our state. We'll also provide resources and strategies to develop your own plan.

ONE VIRGINIA NEWS

The *ONE Virginia Plan* continues to advance inclusive excellence.

We are Many Virginians but strive to be ONE Commonwealth. While the *ONE Virginia Plan* is making in-roads throughout the state, reforming organizations toward DEI will take time and organizational commitment. This is a marathon, not a sprint, and it will require more than just a check-the-box effort. It is also important to note that executive leaders set the tone; and while “buy in” is important, we must collectively move forward with this work despite resistance from members of the workforce. The *ONE Virginia Plan* is a comprehensive resource and model for state government leaders, and progress is an expectation. It serves as an optional resource for other public and private sectors to move forward successfully with diversity, equity, and inclusion.

5 STEPS TO INCLUSIVE EXCELLENCE

1. Make an organizational commitment to Inclusive Excellence (IE)

- Include IE language in your agency or organization's Virginia Performs strategic document
- Incorporate IE into your strategic plan and operational handbooks
- Ensure IE is in every employee's job description and performance evaluation
- Address IE at every meeting of the agency's executive team and staff

2. Assess your agency or organization by analyzing its current practices, policies, and data using the Continuum of Inclusive and Equitable Organizational Development

- Create a diverse workgroup to conduct a formal equity audit or assessment, review exit interviews, interview former employees and external stakeholders, and regularly conduct anonymous and random climate surveys that protect underrepresented employees from feeling targeted

3. Identify and prioritize root causes of systemic inequity and barriers to change

- List the causes and barriers and order them from highest impact to lowest
- Come up with possible remedies and innovations
- Allow staff at all levels to have input with regard to the causes and barriers, as well as remedies and innovations to address them

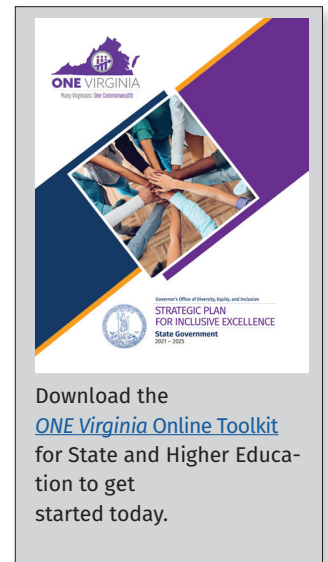
4. Develop strategies to eliminate or mitigate root causes and barriers

- Redesign practices and policies to address opportunity gaps
- Create new programs; eliminate/redesign harmful or ineffective programs

5. Monitor progress of DE&I efforts to ensure they remain integrated, intentional, and central to the core mission and functioning of an inclusive and equitable state government

- Report your progress quarterly to ODEI
- Provide ODEI with proposed solutions

To ensure you're conducting an accurate assessment of your own agency or organization, evaluate exit interviews and consider surveying former employees and community members who don't fear retaliation for providing true criticism or general feedback.

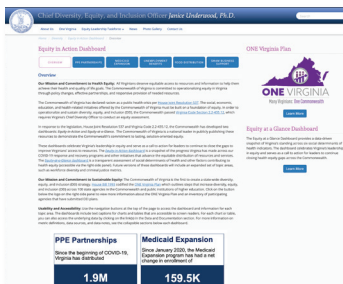


ONE VIRGINIA NEWS (CONTINUED)

Recent ONE Virginia Events:

- **HB 1993 passes into law** — On March 18, House Bill 1993 (HB 1993), sponsored by Delegate Alex Askew, is signed into law by Governor Ralph Northam. HB 1993 requires state agencies to establish and maintain a comprehensive diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan in coordination with the Governor's Director of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion. This legislation codifies the Northam administration's *ONE Virginia Plan* — the first of its kind in the nation. Learn more about HB 1993 [here](#).
- **Strategic Planning Session for Cabinet Members** — On March 22 members of the Governor's Cabinet participated in a Racial Equity Training facilitated by Dr. Veleka Gatling and Dr. Ron Carlee. The Cabinet gained knowledge and skills that will be useful as they implement the *ONE Virginia Plan* across the Governor's Office and all state agencies. Part two of the retreat will be a follow-up discussion with the facilitators regarding how to increase DE&I and implement the *ONE Virginia Plan* into their specific agencies.
- **Virtual Town hall for Agency Leadership** — On March 29, the heads of the various Virginia state agencies met virtually to discuss how inclusive excellence can be implemented throughout the Commonwealth. This will increase organizational effectiveness and set up Virginia to be an employer-of-choice. Topics ranged from mission and goals, to implementation, structure, and planning.
- **Virtual Town hall for State Employees** — On March 31, a virtual meeting with all state employees was held to share the overall plan for inclusive excellence and its implementation throughout the state, making Virginia the first in the nation to launch such a groundbreaking program.

SUCCESS STORIES



Virginia sets the standard — The Health Equity Dashboards launch.

COVID-19 has placed a spotlight on health inequities and structural racism. The Equity Leadership Task force (ELT) and the Health Equity Working Group (HEWG) are providing a snapshot of its equity initiatives in action to improve vulnerable populations' access to resources.

In May, Virginia becomes the first state to launch two Health Equity Dashboards. The Equity-in-Action dashboard is a snapshot of the progress Virginia has made across our COVID-19 response and recovery programs. It also features initiatives that advance the equitable distribution of resources and services. The Equity-at-a-Glance dashboard is a transparent assessment of social determinants of health and other factors contributing to health equity.

This innovative system is a data-driven approach to operationalizing equity in the state. It will enable us to establish and maintain the information we need to confront inequity across the Commonwealth, and it serves as an exemplar for every state in the nation to follow.

The two Health Equity Dashboards have been developed through the Equity Leadership Taskforce (ELT). This Taskforce includes an equity expert in each major partnering agency. Led by Virginia Chief Diversity Officer Dr. Janice Underwood, the leadership of the ELT includes: The Virginia Department of Emergency Management under the direction of State Coordinator Curtis Brown; the Virginia Department of Health (VDH), under the direction of State Health Commissioner Dr. Norman Oliver; Sable K. Nelson, the Acting Director of VDH's Office of Health Equity; and members of the Governor's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

With these two dashboards, Virginia takes a leadership role in making inequity visible, and in doing so, serves as a call to action for diverse leaders to close gaps and improve access to resources for everyone. Future versions of these dashboards will include an expanded set of topic areas, such as workforce diversity and criminal justice.

Learn more information when Equity Dashboards launch in May.

DIVERSITY, EQUITY, AND INCLUSION GUIDANCE AND RESOURCES



Understanding and Confronting Racism.

Since the founding of this nation, both racism and systemic inequity have exclusively discriminated against communities of color. These deterrents to inclusive excellence have inhibited the Commonwealth and the rest of the country from embracing all of its diversity of opinions, cultures, identifications, experiences, and expertise. The first step to countering racism and systemic inequity is education. This can lead to structural change and get us closer to the original constitutional promise of equal opportunity for all.

We have the tools to get you started.

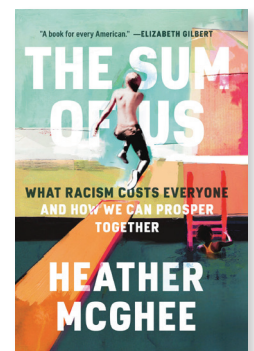
Our Understanding and Confronting Racism document contains resources about various facets of structural racism and inequity including:

- Articles
- Books
- Podcasts
- Videos
- Programs

To download Understanding and Confronting Racism, [click here](#).

The Sum of Us: What Racism Costs Everyone and How We Can Prosper Together by Heather McGhee

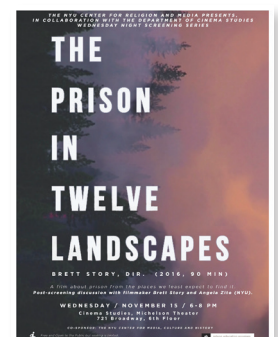
One of many great resources provided in the Understanding and Confronting Racism document is *The Sum of Us* by Heather McGhee. In her book, McGhee analyzes how we arrived here as a nation — divided, self-destructive, and materially rich, yet spiritually starved, and vastly unequal. Through extensive research, she highlights the costs of racism, as well as moving accounts from people yearning to be a part of a better America, including white supremacy's collateral victims: white people themselves.



The Prison in Twelve Landscapes directed by Brett Story

The Prison in Twelve Landscapes is a film about prison in which we never see a penitentiary. Directed by Brett Story, the film unfolds as a cinematic journey through a series of landscapes across the USA where prisons do work and affect lives. From a California mountainside where female prisoners fight raging wildfires, to a Bronx warehouse full of goods destined for the state correctional system, the vignettes showcase communities desperate for prison jobs, people faced with huge fines for minor offenses, and the overwhelming effects on communities across the country.

For more books, movies, and resources on how to combat racism, [click here](#).



INSPIRATIONAL THOUGHTS



Equity vs. Equality.

“We’ve been able to meet the needs, identify the gaps, and work with our community partners...that wouldn’t happen if we didn’t have any equity approach. Equity is a tailored approach, giving people what they need, when, and how they need it, versus an equality approach which is a one-size-fits-all approach.”

Sable K. Nelson

Acting Director, Virginia Department of Health Office of Health Equity

Sable K. Nelson believes the Commonwealth’s understanding of the fundamental differences between equity and equality is shown in its COVID-19 emergency response. The Equity Leadership Taskforce (ELT) and Health Equity Working Group (HEWG) have applied an equitable approach to its policies, distribution of resources, and inclusion of community partners and members in its work.

The Office of Health Equity (OHE) at the Virginia Department of Health works within three divisions: social epidemiology, primary care and rural health, and multicultural health and community engagement. The office utilizes tools and resources such as the Health Equity Dashboards, to use data to operationalize equity statewide. Gone are the days of theories and hypotheses. The ELT and HEWG are objectively confronting and working to abolish racism in health care and across the Commonwealth. Both entities also understand for its COVID-19 emergency response to sustain its success and effectiveness, it must continue to consult and involve the community in its strategy and policy work.

“Nothing for us, without us,” is what Nelson wholly believes in and applies in the work she’s done in the health advocacy space. As Minority Health Month comes to a close, racial and ethnic communities must continue to be prioritized in all state health care and socioeconomic efforts. These communities need help the most because they’ve been subjugated to systemic inequities on all fronts, which further implicates their access to adequate care and resources. The Commonwealth is taking the steps to right these wrongs by keeping these communities at the forefront of its work — far beyond the COVID-19 emergency response. The work is arduous and will extend past the current administration, but it is necessary to ensure a more equitable Virginia for all.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS — UPCOMING MAY OBSERVATIONS

CINCO DE MAYO WEDNESDAY, MAY 5

Join us as we celebrate Mexican heritage on May 5. This day commemorates the date of the Mexican army’s victory over France at the Battle of Puebla in 1862. Let’s join with our friends, families, and neighbors to honor this historic event and continue to reflect on internal language policies in our Commonwealth that service the Hispanic community.

MENTAL HEALTH AWARENESS MONTH

This May, as we observe Mental Health Awareness Month, let’s strive to help reduce the stigma surrounding psychological illnesses. We observe this month to bring communities together, provide education, opportunities, and promote policies that help everyone facing mental health challenges. Take a moment to [learn](#) about how Virginia is expanding opportunities for those with disabilities.

ASIAN AMERICAN AND PACIFIC ISLANDER HERITAGE MONTH

Every May we celebrate and observe Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage Month. This month is dedicated to recognizing the numerous contributions of Asian Americans and Pacific Islander Americans. We celebrate their rich history, culture, achievements, and influence on the United States. Resources to learn more about Asian American and Pacific Islander Heritage can be found [here](#).



Governor’s Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion

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Download the ONE Virginia Plan here: <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/diversity/one-virginia/>

To contact the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, go to <https://www.governor.virginia.gov/diversity/contact-us>



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